

R800 000 pledged for herb market upgrade

DERRICK DLAMINI and ZANELE TSHABALALA

THE Municipality has set aside R800 000 to upgrade the herb traders' market this year.

This will include installing toilets, wash basins and other facilities to improve trading conditions.

Hoosen Moolla, Manager of the Inner Thekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme (iTrump) confirmed this after a successful herb traders

hygiene awareness workshop at Warwick Hall.

Several Municipal departments, including the City's Business Support Unit (BSU), Durban Solid Waste (DSW), and the Health Department organised the workshop.

"Our aim is to encourage traders to have civic pride in their trading environment. We've had a long relationship with them, spanning more than 14 years. This puts a stamp of authority on our endeavours to better their conditions," Moolla said.

"The informative workshop provided an opportunity for traders and City officials to connect and enhance their working relationship.

"As the country prepares for the 2010 World Cup, it is imperative for trading areas to remain clean, to attract foreign tourists who might be interested in African herbs."

At the workshop traders were given tips on promoting their products.

Moolla said they should label their herbs in other languages for tourists inter-

ested in their products.

He called for more co-operation between traders and city officials. "Our doors are open whenever challenges arise," he said.

Willing

The City's Traditional and Complementary Healer Support Manager, Tobias Mkhize, said the response to the workshop showed that traders were willing to improve their lot. "We will redouble our efforts to better

their trading environments," Mkhize said.

Herb Sellers Association Chairwoman, MaDlamini Khumalo, urged traders to, "unite behind this Municipal initiative and ensure our areas remain immaculate. After all, cleanliness is a great motivational factor to our customers.

"As we look forward to welcoming thousands of international visitors coming to watch the World Cup, the onus is on us to inculcate the habit of doing business in a

clean, safe and customer-friendly environment."

She said the standards laid out in the city's by-laws were "for the good of this industry and its future".

Michael Hlangu, of City's BSU, appealed for a change in behaviour. "Some traders have been known to throw fat and other substances into gutters, blocking drains and sewers. This is against hygienic standards and is not conducive to a proper business environment."

dlaminisd@durban.gov.za

Electricity thieves warned

KEN MCHUNU

THE City's Electricity Department has warned residents of informal settlements to quit stealing electricity and has stepped up patrols to stop offenders.

This comes after a two-year-old boy was electrocuted and died after tripping over wires while playing outside his home in Kenville, Sea Cow Lake. The wires had been illegally connected to the grid.

According to his mother and neighbours, Okuhle Mzondi had been playing with friends outside the family's shack, off Gum Tree Road, when his leg got hooked on a bare electric wire and he suffered electric burns.

He appears to have died instantly. Nathi Nkwanyana, of the Electricity Department, said illegal connections were rife in Kenville. But after the death, the department had cleared the area of illegal connections.

"Residents in the (Kenville) area helped us remove illegally connected wires. It had finally dawned on them why we are so hard on illegal connections," he said.

Now, residents found with illegal connections and those who use electricity illegally will be charged for theft.

He said a number of electrocutions had occurred in other informal settlements in eThekweni as a result of illegal connections and cable theft.

Acknowledging that electricity theft had spiralled out of control, the Department's Marketing Manager and Spokesman, Deena Govender, warned thieves they would face the law.

Last year, the department reported that R3.2-million worth of electricity had been stolen in the Uganda informal settlement, near Isipingo, in the past five years.

Load-shedding

Govender said illegal connections forced law-abiding residents to pay higher tariffs. It also put an excessive load on conductors, which led to power outages, and brought eThekweni "closer to load-shedding".

"People who steal electricity do not have transformers to moderate the flow of power. This is why contact with such electricity can be fatal."

Nkwanyana urged the public to blow the whistle on illegal connections.

He said: "Illegal connections are claiming lives. We need communities to work to curb these."

He said apart from patrols and police action to stop power theft, the department has been running awareness campaigns in townships and informal settlements.

Illegal connections, theft and bare cables can be reported to the department on 080 131 3111 (toll-free).

mchunuk@durban.gov.za

TOY STORY



MAYOR Obed Mlaba hands out toys to members of the Zibambele creche and daycare centre in eNgonyameni. The creche had made a plea for the toys to the mayor's office

Picture: SIYABONGA MAPHUMULO

New classrooms built

SIYABONGA MAPHUMULO

A RURAL school in Umgababa has started the new year on a high note, thanks to the donation of two new classrooms.

In the past Umgababa Primary School had to make do with 14 classrooms shared among 610 pupils. And with an average of 45 pupils a class, teachers sometimes had to share a single classroom among 90 pupils.

Now, a non-governmental organisation, Project Build, has come to the school's aid by building it two new classrooms, at a cost of R200 000.

At a function to mark the construction of the class-

rooms last week, Project Build Chief Executive Suzanne Edmunds said her not-for-profit organisation was striving to improve the lot of disadvantaged communities in KZN.

"We have a long-standing relationship with the Mayor's Office, and this is not the first school we have built, and it certainly isn't the last," she said.

Mayor Obed Mlaba thanked Project Build. "As government we face many challenges and education is one of them, but we are also the first to admit we cannot do it alone.

"We are therefore extremely ready and willing to forge public-private partnerships

in this regard," said Mlaba.

The mayor warned the community not to let the school fall into a state of neglect.

Edmunds said Project Build relied on donations from the corporate sector. It had in the past 30 years built more than 5 000 classrooms across the province.

She said the classrooms had been partially funded by Avenmore Elementary School in England.

The principal of Umgababa Primary, Sandile Ntanzu, said: "The additional classrooms couldn't have come at a better time. It will now be much easier for learning to occur."

maphumulosiya@durban.gov.za

Praise for iTrump

THE City's Inner Thekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme (iTrump) has won praise for its Brook Street central market initiative.

The iTrump Area Based Management (ABM) participated in the seventh cycle of the Dubai International Award to Improve the Living Environment. UN-Habitat and the Dubai Municipality adjudged the ABM's handling of the market initiative as conforming to "best practice".

This looked at things such as infrastructure, transport, urban governance and communication.

The market initiative was a joint venture by iTrump and a community-based organisation, the Basha Peer Mazaar Society.

Collin Pillay, of the ABM Programme Office, said they had won recognition for helping to preserve the cultural and religious history of Brook Street, while accommodating the growing informal trading sector at the entrance of the city. – *Derrick Dlamini*

Deposits explained

There have been a number of queries from the public about Council deposits and their purpose recently.

The City Treasury says the deposits are incurred when you register as a ratepayer and this money is used for:

□ Risk mitigation

This is in case a customer fails to pay his or her rates. A risk profile of each customer is created, based on the customer's account history with the Council.

□ Cash flow

The City needs funds to pay its electricity and water suppliers, Eskom and Umgeni Water.

Customers have 90 days to settle lights and water accounts, but the City has 15 days to pay its suppliers.

□ Increase in consumption

If there is a drastic increase in consumption, more money must be paid to suppliers and this accounts for the increase in deposits. – *Metro Reporter*

Computer centre opens at Umlazi school

ZIBUSE NDLOVU

THE pupils of a Durban school are set to bridge the digital divide, with the help of a KwaZulu-Natal company.

Umlazi Comprehensive Technical High School (Comtech), with some 2 700 pupils, now has a technology centre, complete with 50 computers, thanks to a R500 000 donation from

Aberdare Cables.

"This fully-fledged computer centre will help the pupils develop their knowledge and link ideas with reality," said Mayor Obed Mlaba at a hand-over ceremony last week.

He said the centre was a prime example of how big businesses could be part of nation building by investing in education.

"In the midst of the perceived demise in the South African education system, it is comforting to have people who still produce excellence."

Parents

Mlaba said part of the successes of Umlazi Comtech was due to the participation of parents in the management of the school.

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Education, Ina Cronje, applauded the school for its achievements and discipline.

"Discipline and dedication of teachers play a vital role in preparing the mind and the attitude of the child," she said.

Deputy Chief Executive of Aberdare Cables, Ian Miller, said his company had chosen Umlazi Comtech because of

its consistently good academic results. The school has an excellent matric pass rate of 80% to 100% from 1995 to 2006.

"We are very impressed by the school's achievements and it heartens us to be able to support students of Comtech in rising to even greater heights in future," Miller said.

ndlovuz@durban.gov.za